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Seasonable Considerations

TO THE

Young Men & Women

Who in This

DAY of TRYAL

Are made willing to offer up themselves, Estates or Liberty, and suffer Reproaches, with other hard Usages in the Streets of this City, and Else-where.

To bear a Testimony for the Life, Light and Truth of Jesus Christ.

And to all who make a Profession of the same, this in the tender Love of God is written.

By *Mary Forster.*

LONDON:

Printed and Sold by Andrew Sowle *at the Crooked-Billet in* Holloway-Lane, Shoreditch, 1684.

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Some seasonable Considerations to the Young Men and Women, who in this Day of Tryal are made willing to offer up themselves, Estates or Liberty to suffer Reproaches and other hard Usages in the Streets of this City, and else-where, to bear a Testimony for the Life, Light and Truth of our Lord Jesus Christ, &c.

FRiends, Consider your *Calling*, 'tis *High*, 'tis *Holy*, 'tis out of the World, its *beggarly Rudiments*, its *false Ways* and *Worships*, its *Customs* and *Fashions*, with all the *Abominations*, *Prophanations*, *Sports* and *Pastimes*; Into what? even the *glorious Liberty of the Sons of God*, to be made conformable unto Christ our Head, to be in him *Holy* as he is *Holy*, then to be Heirs with him, joynt Heirs with Christ, and to sit with him in the heavenly places; O blessed Exchange! unspeakable Love! What manner of Persons ought we to be? saith the honest Heart; Oh! let none of us walk unworthy of such *Mercy*, but keep a living sence thereof upon our hearts, continually, watching over our Thoughts, Words and Works, that we in all may glorifie the Lord our God,

who is worthy to be *Loved, Feared, Reverenced* and *Obeyed*, from henceforth and forever.

The matter chiefly upon my Heart is this, That as there is now a more *publick Teſtimony* born to Gods bleſſed Truth, than when we had liberty to aſſemble our ſelves together in our Meeting-houſes; ſo now let our care be more to anſwer our Profeſſion; *for we are as a Candle in a Candleſtick, not under a Bed or Buſhel*; yea, as *a City ſet upon a Hill*, publickly taken notice of, to be of that number, of them, who dare not omit the *Aſſembling our ſelves together, as the manner of ſome is, but we muſt confeſs him before men, who* (we know) *will not deny us before his heavenly Father*; we muſt bear our Teſtimony to the bleſſed Truth he hath made us Partakers of, though in ſuch Hazards: Let this, *my dear Friends*, engage our Souls to all Circumſpection in our Lives and Converſations, that we give no occaſion to the Enemy to blaſpheme or ſpeak Evil of that holy Profeſſion we are called to hold forth in the midſt of a perverſe and crooked Generation, amongſt whom we ought to ſhine as Lights, *that men ſeeing our holy chaſte Converſation, coupled with fear, may glorifie our Father*; to this ſurely every honeſt Heart cannot but ſay, *Amen, Amen*, as ſaith my Soul.

Friends, the Enemy of our Souls is buſie, both within and without, yea, *the Devil ſtill goes about as a roaring Lyon, ſeeking which of us he can devour*; and he may ſuffer us to make a Profeſſion, even in the ſtricteſt manner, whilſt he endeavours to ſpoil us of our Poſſeſſion; he will not diſturb us, if he can but draw into looſeneſs or lightneſs, 'tis poſſible you may ſpeak the *plain Language* without interruption, if you will but uſe it in *fooliſh Talking* and *idle Jeſting*; and although you do not appear in the *Superfluities*

perfluities of this wanton Age in your *Apparel*, but in *plain Cloathing*, yet if you do ſuffer your Hearts to be in the *Nicities*, *Coſtlineſs* and *Curioſities*, and let them be as like the World as may be, *Lace* only excepted (if you can but eſcape the Reproofs of them who abſtain from every appearance of Evil, and hate the Garments ſpotted with the fleſh) then the Soul's Enemy will indulge you therein, and you may for a time poſſibly, in this day of Tryal, *come frequently to Meetings, ſtand in the Streets, bear the Gain-ſaying of Scoffers*, and the *haling before Magiſtrates*; but if any of you indulge a looſe careleſs Spirit, ſuch *make void their Suffering, invalidate their Teſtimony, and fall ſhort of the Reward and Comfort of the Upright*, and ſo will not hold out to the end. This I write, not to accuſe any particular, but do beſeech all to ſtand upon their *Watch*, that they ſuffer not this Spirit to prevail in them, or if it have any place in any that makes a Profeſſion of Gods pure holy *Truth*, to give no reſt to their Eyes, nor ſlumber to their Eye-lids, till they are turned to the Light of Chriſt Jeſus in their Conſciences, and liſten to its Reproofs, which now, as heretofore, bears a faithful Witneſs againſt every evil Word and Work, and as it is heard, believed in and obeyed, will give ſtrength to overcome all and every thing that is of that Nature.

Oh, *my Friends!* preſs forward in the holy Warfare; for of a truth, *Victory* may be obtained, if you run well, and continue to the end, you ſhall have a Crown of Glory.

Friends, Let me expoſtulate the matter a little with you; I know there is many, that when the Enemy of mans Soul comes to tempt to any groſs Sins, can have

no

no entrance, their Souls abhor this or the other Abomination, so as to gross Enormities he may come and have nought in Thousands; but the great danger lies here in little things, and they think their Souls may live in this *little Zoar*, if they escape the Sins of *Sodom*, and such like.

But here's a *Snare*, here's a *Rock* that many are split on, taking liberty in little matters, in *Decency*, till *Pride* sits in the Chair, in excessive *Merriment*, which some call *Cheerfulness*, till it come to such *vain* and *immoderate Laughter* as the wise men call *Madness*, appears in their Conversations; *They must not be too demunitive* (some will say) *they must be friendly to all, free to discourse with any*, and this may be good in its place, but for want of taking up the daily Cross, and not being upon the *Watch*, they become one with the *idle Talker* and *foolish Jester*; and so in many other cases; As, *We may be Angry and sin not*, which is true; but letting themselves loose, here the Enemy takes an Advantage, and in the Night sows his evil Seed, and the wrathful hasty spirit gets up, grows strong, till that which is tender, meek and lowly in themselves, and others they converse with, is grieved, and groans under the Oppression. And from this Spirit there's no deliverance till they come again to learn of him that's meek and lowly, as they did at their first Convincement, when after great and sore Travels they did find rest unto their souls, in him that was meek and lowly.

And its at these Breaches, the Enemy being entred, the more grosser and grievous sins enter, and so even the old Iniquity is revived, and the *sin that so easily besets gets up again*; and by giving way to this vain Imagination,

That

That such small things will not hurt, the foolish Heart comes to be darkned, & the poor Soul that once was raised, comes to be enthralled, and a good Condition to be lost, and it will be harder with such to be restored, than it was for them to be brought into the knowledge of the Truth at the beginning.

And this also hath been known by sad Experience, when any one hath let in *Grief*, and joyned the Powers of their Souls with it, here the Enemy of mans Peace lays seige, sometimes tempting the poor bewildred soul to *despair of the Mercy of the Lord*, sometimes to *Curse God and dye*, and sometimes to *lay violent hands on it self*.

Oh, *my dear Friends!* what need is here to stand upon the *Watch*, to keep in the pure fear of the Lord, even all the day long? for if any Affections or Passion inordinately be suffered to harbour in the Soul, the danger is great.

And yet further, what hath been said in these foregoing particulars, may be said also *of letting in the Worldly Spirit*, which none ever knew whilst it had rule in their hearts, but at the entrance thereof, as the Eye of the Mind has been towards the Lord, to be kept and preserved from every Evil that would grieve the good Spirit, or hinder Communion with it, the Lord opens the mysterious workings of this Spirit in the honest Heart, and strengtheneth him with all Diligence to keep the *Watch*, and here the Soul escapes this Snare, that is so privily laid, that many are ensnared and taken, and call it *good Husbandry*.

O remember the great Love of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath commanded his Disciples, *To cast all their care upon God, who careth for them, and hath given himself for us, that he might deliver us from this present evil World.*

And

And let any experienced one, into whose hands this may come, consider, Have you at any time let in the Spirit of Prejudice, (more especially upon the account of Religion) against any Person? Let the cause be right or wrong, yet if once it be let in, and you converse with it, and give liberty to your Thoughts therein, how apt are you to receive any Report that may tend to make the Breach wider? how ready it is for any prejudiced Person to take wrong Measures of right Actions, as thus, If any in the pure Love of God, that thinketh no evil, watch over his Brother for good, or the Antients in *Israel*, who are unblameable in their Lives and Conversations, who have (if the word *Rule* can be born) ruled for God, and are truly worthy of *double Honour*; if such knowing the Wiles of *Satan*, as also the Terrors of the Almighty, shall propose good and wholsom Methods to keep all within the Church of Christ sweet and clean, in which the honest hearted rejoyce, yet the prejudiced spirit will cry out presently of *Lordships*, of *Laws*, *Church Canons* and *Imposition*; though at the same time those who were in Christ before them, and by Grace were made Members of that Body of which Christ is the Head, declare to such, *That its but the godly Care of our Brethren to preserve every Member in its place and good Order*. Much might be written, but I did only intend to hint at these things, and beg of the Lord they may be enlarged in my soul, as in every honest Heart, as there may be any occasion.

Oh Friends! I am deeply grieved in the Consideration of these things, and its the cry of my soul to the God of all Grace, **Arise, O Lord, and rebuke this Gain-saying Spirit; Arise thou mighty God, whose Fan is in thy**

thy hand, and thoroughly purge thy Floor. Bring down into thy pure fear (which makes and keeps the heart clean) every one that makes a Profession of thy pure holy Truth.

And now to conclude with that which was principally upon my heart in the beginning, in which let me expostulate again with any or every honest Heart, into whose hands this may come, that hath but known or experienced any thing of the Power of God to make clean the Vessel, and that hath been convinced of the Evil of their Ways, Words and Works, and in the Light, Strength and Power of God hath been made able to judge down every appearance of Evil in themselves, that hath not had Holiness to the Lord stamped thereon. Oh! why should any such turn again to Folly, and build again those things they once pulled down, or allow themselves in any thing now, which heretofore they durst not live in the Practice of?

Friends, Truth is unchangeably pure, and that which it appears against to day, it will not allow to morrow: Therefore, I beseech you in the Love of God, try and examine, *Durst I take a false Liberty in the day of my Espousal? Why should I do so now? Are not my Obligations greater now than ever, now I can say*, My Maker is my Husband, *& he provideth all things necessary for my Spiritual as well as Temporal Well-being, and if I do not depart from him, he hath promised*, He will never leave me nor forsake me? *Why then should I allow any Evil Spirit to lodge within me, any accursed thing to approach his Temple, to hinder me in my near Approaches unto him? Why should I suffer a wild, wanton airy Spirit to get up, that will unavoidably make me vain in my Conversation, seeing I could not be redeemed*

there-from by Silver nor Gold, or any corruptible thing, but with the precious Blood of Jesus Christ? Shall I trample under Foot the Blood of Christ? or shall my light unsavoury Words and Actions cause any to say, It is an unholy thing? *Shall I deny my* Redemption, *and my* Redeemer (*even to all them that behold*) *by my vain Conversation? God forbid.*

Or, if at any time there hath been a neglect, the Watch has not been kept, nor the Prayer offered, but as it were for a little time, the Soul forgetting that it was cleansed, entreth into the Temptation, and toucheth with the unsanctifi'd thing, yet as the Heart abides honest, the pure holy Fear will spring again in such a Breast, and that Man or Woman will soon see from whence they are fallen, and will cry, with *David, Restore me, O Lord, to my former Condition; take not thy holy Spirit from me; set thou a Watch before my Mouth, that I offend not with my Tongue: O Lord, keep the Door of my Lips,* &c. This is the care of the Upright, that whether in Eating or Drinking, in Speaking or in Silence, all might be done to the Praise and Glory of God.

Friends, we above all the Families of the Earth, bear our Testimonies to Christ's Appearance in spirit, and to that *Grace which hath appeared to all men, teaching us* (who have received it) *to deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live Soberly, Godly and Righteously in this present World. And shall we allow our selves in any thing that is justly reproveable? God forbid; I will set a Watch over my Thoughts,* saith the honest Heart, *for my God knoweth them afar off; and I must give an account for every idle Word; I will watch over my Eyes, for my Lord hath said,* Whosoever looketh upon a Woman and lusteth after her, hath committed

mitted Adultery with her already in his Heart; *and the Apoſtle* James *ſaith*, Whoſoever ſeemeth to be Religious, and bridleth not his Tongue, that mans Religion is vain. *And Oh! that all my Works might witneſs the Lord at hand, ſeeing they muſt follow me after Death.* [Here is Heart-work indeed] bleſſed is he who worketh out his Salvation with Fear and Trembling; ſuch ſhall be ſafe, and no evil Tidings can make them afraid; ſuch ſhall hold out in all Tryals, for they are builded upon a ſure Foundation, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf being the chief Corner Stone.

Friends, This is a Day wherein Satan deſires, yea, doth indeed winnow all Profeſſions, bleſſed is that Perſon and that People who partake of the benefit of our Lords praying, for he hath prayed, That their Faith fail not; and him the Father heareth alwayes; bleſſed are they who watch and keep their Garments unſpotted, their Converſation will be ſuch as will adorn the Goſpel.

Now unto God only wiſe, who comforts his People with his Rod and with his Staff, he who knows our frame, and will not ſuffer any who fear his Name to be tempted above what they are able to bear, and in the fitteſt Seaſon will deliver Jacob *out of all his Troubles, To him be all Power, Might, Majeſty, with Dominion and holy Praiſes given and aſcribed from this time henceforth and forever, ſaith my Soul.*

MARY FORSTER.

THE END.

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